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Directorate of Intelligence
Office of African and Latin American Analysis

25 September 1992

NOTE FOR: Mr. Gary Gray
Somalia Desk Officer
Department of State

Attached is a memorandum that examines past efforts to resolve Somalia's political crisis and draws some lessons from them. Given the heightened interest in finding a political solution for Somalia, we thought you might be interested in this review.

We hope to follow up with a speculative memo that addresses various scenarios for Somalia's future. As usual, please call me on 734-9563 (STU III) if you have any questions or comments.


Chief, Africa Division
African and Latin American Analysis

Attachment

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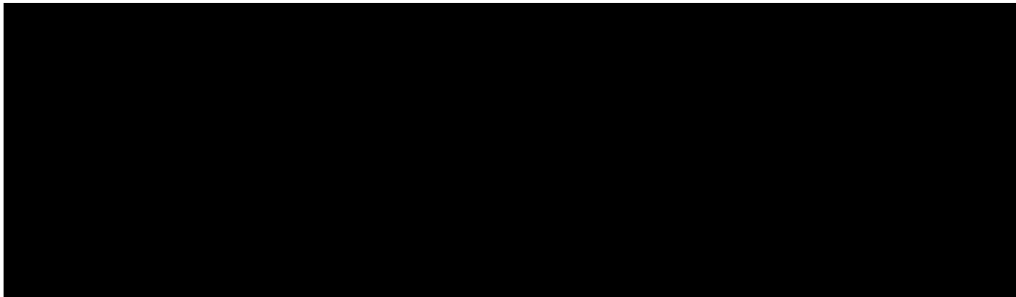
Intelligence Memorandum
Office of African and Latin American Analysis
24 September 1992

Somalia: Lessons Learned from What Hasn't Worked



Summary

The many and bitter clan and subclan divisions in Somalia will make reconciliation a daunting challenge, as evidenced by an examination of the number of failed efforts to end the anarchy raging there since former President Siad's overthrow in early 1991. Nonetheless, we believe interested parties in the international community can learn from previous failures and make a positive contribution toward longer-term stability in Somalia, even as the focus of foreign assistance remains famine relief for the indefinite future. We believe regional enclaves would provide the international community with the best means for establishing areas of stability, thus creating a foundation for eventual political and economic recovery in Somalia.



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Background

Created in 1960 from the union of British Somaliland in the north and southern Somalia with its Italian colonial heritage, the country's disintegration since then has resulted from a long succession of divisive policies inflicted on a people already burdened by grinding poverty and torn by deeply-engrained animosities between the country's five major clans and 17 subclans. Former President Mohammed Siad Barre, who siezed power in 1969 and wielded it until early 1991, bears much of the responsibility for furthering these trends. The imposition of martial law in northern Somalia in the early 1980s by Siad's southern, Marehan-clan dominated government generated widespread local support for a secessionist movement. Moreover, by fueling clan rivalries, Siad sought to undermine the development of a broad-based political opposition. His regime encouraged clan feuds over grazing and water rights and distributed cash and weapons to traditional clan rivals to keep them from organizing against him. In our judgment, these divide-and-rule policies succeeded primarily in arming a large proportion of the population with modern, destructive weapons--interclan trading and raiding insured that no clan remained unarmed--and in raising the level of violence throughout the country. [REDACTED]

Since Siad's overthrow, Somalia--the only ethnically and linguistically unitary country in Africa--has disintegrated into a patchwork of feuding clans and subclans. The transitional government in Mogadishu installed by the United Somali Congress (USC)--itself split by internal warfare into two major factions--has been unable to consolidate its control over even the capital. The Somali National Movement (SNM) unilaterally declared an independent Somaliland Republic in the north shortly after the Siad regime fell, but the north has also been fractured by internal factions and clan animosities. [REDACTED]

Frustrated Mediators: Failures of Reconciliation

Rome Tries to Lend a Helping Hand

Mediation efforts by the Italian government in 1991 underscore the difficulties encountered when Somali factions doubt the impartiality of mediators. Soon after Siad fled Mogadishu, Italy, as the former colonial power for most of Somalia, attempted to bring all sides together for talks in Rome. Although the Italian Ambassador logged impressive mileage visiting Somali cities in both the north and south, widespread distrust of Italy following Rome's years of support for Siad served to undermine the Italian initiative [REDACTED]. Indeed, at one time the ambassador's plane was strafed by a USC-controlled aircraft during a humanitarian mission to Chismayu, almost certainly because the Hawiya USC feared Rome was supporting Darod clan supporters of Siad. [REDACTED]

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Lesson. Of critical importance to mediating powers is their acceptance by all concerned Somali factions as non-partisan --acceptance which must be continuously cultivated among all Somali leaders, who are typically xenophobic and suspicious. The Italian experience shows that failure to maintain a reputation for objectivity may lead factions to attack foreign emissaries they suspect of favoring rivals. [REDACTED]

Eritrea Makes a Bid to Bring Peace

An Eritrean peace initiative late in 1991 initially appeared promising, primarily because the Eritreans were considered a neutral party by most Somalis. Eritrean delegations twice visited Mogadishu; as recently as December 1991 their negotiators, who were communicating with both USC factions, believed a national reconciliation conference could be arranged in Asmera, [REDACTED] We believe, however, that the two factions--especially that aligned with General Aideed--did not negotiate in good faith, each trying to use the Eritrean initiative to their advantage as they jockeyed for foreign backing. When heavy fighting erupted in Mogadishu between Aideed and Ali Mahdi forces late last year, beleaguered Eritrean officials in Asmera told US diplomats that they no longer believed their efforts could be productive. [REDACTED]

Lesson. The Eritrean initiative shows how Somalia's warlords will use negotiations as a means to forestall combat while they build up their military forces, or as a tactic to convince rivals to lower their guard. Mediators cannot rely on promises of cooperation or cease-fire pledges alone, but must build verification procedures and good-faith gestures into any negotiation process. [REDACTED]

The Djibouti Conferences

The most promising reconciliation effort was that orchestrated by the government of Djibouti during the summer of 1991. In our judgment, Djibouti was on the verge of brokering a settlement in June, when representatives from five factions--including the USC and Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM)--agreed to a cease-fire. Six factions attended the subsequent meeting in July, agreeing to form a transitional government with Ali Mahdi as President, a move that gave his government some legitimacy. [REDACTED]

The Djibouti talks were undone, however, because the organizers failed to bring two key actors to the table--the SNM and Aideed's faction of the USC. The SNM, believing it was well on the way to gaining international recognition for its Somaliland Republic, refused to attend the Djibouti talks on the grounds that it was the ruling party of Somaliland, not "just another faction." Aideed, elected USC Chairman just prior to the second round of Djibouti talks, refused to go along with the cease-fire in order to prevent further legitimization of Ali Mahdi's presidency. Moreover, as the talks progressed, it became clear that other factions, like the SPM, also were splitting along pro-Aideed and pro-Ali Mahdi lines. [REDACTED]

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Lesson. Negotiations will fail to produce lasting agreements in Somalia unless every party capable of disrupting a political settlement is included. Given the sheer number of clan and subclan groups, however, a piecemeal approach that concentrates on regional and subclan reconciliation first, such as that currently being pursued by UN Special Representative Mohamed Sahnoun, appears to have the best chance for being inclusive while avoiding the potential for unwieldiness. [REDACTED]

Enclaves of Peace: Hope for the Future or Pipe Dream?

Accord at the regional level in Somalia is not only a prerequisite for national reconciliation; it also holds out the hope for enclaves of relative stability that can serve as avenues through which to channel relief aid. Efforts to create the Somaliland Republic shortly after Siad's fall and the development more recently of a seemingly effective Majertain administration in northeastern Somalia provide excellent examples of the possibilities and problems associated with this approach. [REDACTED]

Somaliland

The Somaliland Republic initially seemed a potential island of political stability that might serve as building block for a federation. Claiming legitimacy because it was the successor to British Somaliland and promising stability because it was controlled by one dominant clan, the Ishaak, the Somaliland Republic appeared far more stable and cohesive than the south. [REDACTED]

Dissension within the SNM over Somaliland President Tur's inability to garner international recognition or economic aid undermined unity in the north, however. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Lesson. Somaliland's political disintegration resulted from subclan squabbling for limited resources following Tur's failure to garner foreign recognition and assistance. High-profile economic aid and political support for enclaves not yet afflicted by subclan warfare might forestall the kind of fragmentation that occurred in Somaliland. [REDACTED]

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Majertainia

The northeastern, Majertain clan-dominated corner of Somalia remains relatively peaceful by current Somali standards, [REDACTED]. Controlled by the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF)--once an anti-Siad insurgent group--the northeast apparently has not experienced the subclan warfare common in the rest of the country. Its main port, Bosaso, has suffered little damage, despite periodic clashes between SSDF forces and Islamic fundamentalists, and reportedly has served as a reliable avenue for trade to much of the region. The northeast's relative stability led UN envoy Sahnoun to comment earlier this year to US officials that delivering aid to the region might encourage other factions in the country to emulate the Majertain and stop fighting. [REDACTED]

Although the Majertain enclave might be described as relatively "tranquil," the northeast is not without problems of political instability and violence--a UN doctor was murdered in Bosaso earlier this year, for example. In addition to subclan frictions that have led to a leadership dispute within the SSDF, fighting between Islamic fundamentalists and the SSDF has also occurred. Moreover, Majertain leaders fear Aideed will eventually attack southern Majertain lands, according to US officials. Tensions with the USC warlord's Habr Gedr subclan of the Hawiya have sparked fighting in the past and could flare into warfare again. [REDACTED]

Lesson. Peace in the northeast is fragile, and certain conditions unique to the region have combined to produce the subclan cooperation noted in Majertain lands. The northeast was spared the destructive combat that devastated Mogadishu and Somaliland's major cities during the revolt against Siad, and clan leaders and the general population alike appear reluctant to allow the kind of violence besetting neighboring enclaves. Furthermore, the SSDF leadership has faced a steady series of threats from Islamic fundamentalists and Aideed's forces, which we believe has helped the SSDF avoid political fragmentation. [REDACTED]

Conflict between Aideed and the SSDF demonstrates that even the relatively stable Majertain lands are not divorced from warfare in the rest of the country. The northeastern enclave will have difficulty fostering stability while facing serious external threats. Majertain leaders would therefore value security assistance equally with humanitarian and development aid. [REDACTED]

Waiting for a Winner: Letting the Civil War Run Its Course

Let the Best Man Win?

Had Aideed succeeded in seizing power from Ali Mahdi in November 1991, the situation in Somalia for the last year might at least have been simplified. His alliance with

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Somaliland's President Tur and southern warlord Omar Jess might have been parlayed into a national government that overshadowed other rivals. As the war in Mogadishu dragged on, however, conflicts between other clan-based armies intensified. Tur has been reduced to the status of factional leader among squabbling subclans of the Ishaak. Omar Jess has been forced to fend off rival factions of his Ogadeni clan-controlled SPM, while battling the very capable Majertain warlord General Morgan, Siad's former Minister of Defense. [REDACTED]

Lesson. Although a strongman may eventually emerge, the evidence of the last year suggests that continuing anarchy has increased clan and subclan divisions and led to intensified factional fighting. Although one faction periodically has appeared to achieve a dominant position over its rivals, new subdivisions within the winning clan or coalitions between previously antagonistic clans have emerged to shift the balance of power. Furthermore, although subclan disputes have come to dominate Somalia's current warfare, longstanding unresolved animosities between the country's five major clans will confront any clan warlord looking to win national power. [REDACTED]

Or Wait for the Ammunition to Run Out?

The various clan-based armies fighting throughout Somalia are well-supplied with arms and ammunition, including howitzers, antitank guns, and rocket launchers. [REDACTED] the large military stockpiles amassed by former Somali President Siad and former Ethiopian President Mengistu are probably the main sources for weapons and ammunition. Some reports also describe a flourishing local arms market, while others claim that Libya or Iran have become the primary sources of arms for one faction or another. [REDACTED]

Existing munitions stockpiles in the Horn of Africa are plentiful. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Lesson. We have no way of estimating how long Somalia's factions can fight before exhausting their munitions, but available evidence suggests their stockpiles are extensive. Aideed, for example, overran several ammunition depots in the southeast while chasing Siad into Kenya in the spring. Moreover, warlords have become adept at finding suppliers in the international arms markets. An Aideed lieutenant, Osman Atto, is widely

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reputed to have considerable contacts in international smuggling circles, [REDACTED]
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Where the Lessons Lead: Aiding Recovery From Anarchy

The string of failed efforts to overcome Somalia's many, deep-seated problems underscores the difficulty of finding reliable solutions. To end the clan-based fragmentation tearing the country apart, Somali leaders--as well as interested parties in the international community--will need to address the short-term problems of famine and disorder as well as the longer term process of building stable political and social institutions. Although the prospects appear slim, we believe some positive steps toward longer-term stability are feasible. [REDACTED]

Despite the fighting in Somaliland and factionalism in the Majertain region, we believe regional enclaves remain the best hope for establishing areas of stability. Reporting from [REDACTED] for example, that Majertain clan lands in central Somalia remain relatively peaceful. If the Majertain are able to establish order within their homeland, fend off neighboring warlords, provide access to international relief organizations, and restore a semblance of economic normalcy, such an island of stability might serve as a base for extending order to the rest of the country. Some humanitarian volunteers argue, for example, that international aid for the northeast might have a "demonstration" affect, convincing embattled warlords Aideed and Ali Mahdi that making peace would reap tangible rewards. [REDACTED]

The collapse of Somaliland suggests, however, that Majertainia may not find lasting stability without outside help. Enclave leaders must persuade rivals to cooperate in order to avoid subclan fragmentation and civil war, and they are unlikely to succeed in this endeavor if they cannot provide economic patronage and political prestige in return for such cooperation and support. High-profile assistance from the international community--including food relief, development assistance, and possibly diplomatic recognition--can provide enclave leaders with both the material for patronage and the perception of international approval needed to enhance their legitimacy. Furthermore, regional administrations must be secured from neighboring warlords and discouraged from seeking security by supporting armed rivals across their borders. [REDACTED]

In our judgment, long-term political stability in Somalia cannot be achieved without the creation of political and social institutions that can maintain order, resolve disputes, select leaders, and promote unity among social forces. Every political organization we are aware of in Somalia represents the interests of a particular clan, however, and these groups are factionalized along internal subclan lines. Clan and subclan leaders in

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Somalia see national politics as a "winner take all" contest, in our judgment. One clan seeks to attain power so it can use the resources of the state and nation for its benefit.

[REDACTED]

To break the cycle of violence and clan interest, Somalia's leaders need to develop respected institutions that are given some measure of independence. The process could begin with regional conferences aimed at reconciling subclan disputes, an approach now advocated by the UN. Eventually, a national reconciliation conference--organized by an impartial body and including all Somali factions--would seek to generate a common sense of national identity and purpose. At such a conference, discussions could focus on developing impartial political and governmental institutions--such as a multi-clan police force--that foster clan participation and cooperation.

[REDACTED]

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